

## Know Your Contract: Weingarten Rights

By Jennifer Hall

(Editor's note: This is the second installment of our new column on getting to know your SEA contract. Please, let us know if you have questions about our contract or if you have ideas of articles in the contract to cover here.)

If you have suspicion that a meeting requested by an administrator may result in discipline, dismissal, or negative working conditions, you have the right to request that an SEA representative be present to bear witness for you and represent your interests as a union member. Union members' right to representation at investigatory interviews was upheld in the 1975 Supreme Court case, *NLRB v Weingarten*.

The right to representation and the right to be free of coercion by supervisors to waive that right, came to be termed, "Weingarten Rights". Employers or supervisors are not required to inform employees

of their Weingarten Rights. It is the duty of unions to educate their members that they don't have to go it alone; that they have Weingarten Rights. Some unions provide members with Weingarten Rights cards (like the one below). The SEA does not provide cards to members, but Weingarten Rights are mentioned in C-2 of the Certificated Bargaining Agreement as follows:

"Weingarten Rights: Employees have the right to request union representation in all meetings or interviews which may lead to disciplinary action. The supervisor shall grant the employee's request to be represented by the SEA; provided, however, the meeting/interview shall not be delayed more than seventy-two (72) hours unless both parties agree to an extension of time limits."

Know your rights. Ask for representation.

## How long must Seattle teachers save for house down payment? New study says 15-19 years

By Neal Morton

October 18, 2007

(Editor's note: The Seattle Education Association's contract with SPS expires in August 2018 before the next school year starts. Soon contract negotiations will begin. One key issue the SPS will need to address seriously is wages. Below, we reprint an article published in *The Seattle Times* which highlights the rising cost of living in Seattle.)

In cities across the U.S., school districts are looking for creative ways to help teachers afford to live near their schools.

School officials in San Francisco, for example, are planning to build 100-150 below-market housing units for educators in a \$44 million partnership with their city.

Other districts have offered homebuying grants to attract teachers to places with rising housing costs, or provided modular homes rent-free.

No such proposals have surfaced in Seattle, even though this city is one of the least-affordable places for teachers, according to a new analysis by the National Council on Teacher Quality, or NCTQ.

According to a report that NCTQ released Tuesday, first-year teachers in Seattle on average earn about \$48,100, while data from the real-estate website Zillow shows the median rent for a one-bedroom apartment here tops \$1,350. That means beginning educators, if they live alone, would have to fork over more than 30 percent of their wages to pay the rent — above the widely accepted gauge of housing affordability.

Teachers with five years of experience, a master's degree and better pay would pay about 28 percent of their annual salary on rent for a one-bedroom in Seattle, according to the NCTQ data.

The NCTQ is a Washington, D.C.-based think tank that typically advocates for reforms to teacher evaluation and pay policies. But for this study, President Kate Walsh said her organization wanted to see where teachers struggle to afford the basic expense of putting a roof over their heads.

Cities like San Francisco and Seattle — which are grappling with skyrocketing rent and housing prices — should pay more attention to who can afford to work in their schools, she said.

"Are you giving people enough money to buy a house or even rent a modest apartment?" she asked. "If you aren't doing that, you're sort of depriving a profession of what makes it a profession."

Seattle is not alone in its housing challenges for teachers. The NCTQ found new teachers can expect their housing costs to exceed the 30 percent affordability threshold in about a quarter of 124 large districts in the U.S., including Los Angeles, Portland, San Diego and San Francisco.

While there's no official program in Seattle to help teachers with affordable housing, two Seattle companies recently announced plans to build at least 1,000 new "workforce apartments" with rents aimed at teachers, firefighters and other midlevel workers.

No similar programs exist for homebuying.

The NCTQ crunched the numbers to see how long teachers, if they saved 10 percent of their salary each year, would need before they could make a 20 percent down payment on a median-priced home.

Beginning teachers in Seattle would need nearly 19 years to save that much on their own, while a five-year teacher with a master's degree would need 15 years. At the maximum salary offered in Seattle schools, about \$94,000, a veteran teacher would have to save for just under 10 years.

The NCTQ analysis also may underestimate the time needed, since it used U.S. Census Bureau data that — at least for Seattle — pegs the median housing value at much less than local home-sale data.

In contrast, a new teacher in Detroit or San Antonio would have to save three years or less to afford a home. That was the shortest time frame that NCTQ found. The longest, at nearly 30 years, was San Francisco.

In the middle, "almost all of the districts in the Midwest and the South pay teachers enough to save for a down payment within 10 years," the think tank's report said.

<https://www.seattletimes.com/education-lab/how-long-must-seattle-teachers-save-for-house-down-payment-new-study-says-15-19-years/>

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# Educators' Vision

Published By the Social Equity Educators (SEE)

December 2017

## Black Lives Matter at School Week: February 5-9<sup>th</sup>, 2017

On October 19, 2016, the 5,000 plus members of the Seattle Education Association along with the support of students, parents, and community members took a stand and put the Black Lives Matter at School movement on the national map. Then starting on January 23, 2017, social justice educators from the Caucus of Working Educators within the Philadelphia Federation of Teachers pushed the movement forward with an entire Black Lives Matter week in Philly public schools.

Now educators from more than a dozen cities, including New York, Chicago, Boston, Washington D.C., and Baltimore, are collectively organizing the first ever national Black Lives Matter week of education and action. Each day of the week will focus on a different demand. They are as follows:

**Monday February 5:** Restorative Justice, Empathy, Loving Engagement. In addition, this will be the demands day where all the demands for this week of action will be announced.

**Tuesday February 6:** Diversity, Globalism

**Wednesday February 7:** Trans-Affirming, Queer Affirming, and Collective Value

**Thursday February 8:** Intergenerational, Black Families, and Black Villages

**Friday February 9:** Black Women, Unapologetically Black.

### What can you do?

- Vote yes on the Black Lives Matter at School new business item (It's below and will be voted on at the December 11<sup>th</sup>, SEA Representative Assembly.)
- Assuming it passes, wear your Black Lives Matter shirts that week.
- Teach lesson plans using the nationally agreed upon demands for each day. Black educators from around the country are taking the lead in designing curriculum that any interested educator can use for this week.
- Join the national conference calls with educators from around the country to help continue making plans for the week of education and action. Contact SEE members for the call information.
- Attend the next SEE meeting on December 17 to help organize our local plans.
- Check out the National Black Lives Matter Week of Action in Our Schools Facebook page to see what's happening around the country:

[https://www.facebook.com/pg/The-National-Black-Lives-Matter-Week-of-Action-in-Our-Schools-192373061312325/about/?ref=page\\_internal](https://www.facebook.com/pg/The-National-Black-Lives-Matter-Week-of-Action-in-Our-Schools-192373061312325/about/?ref=page_internal)

### Upcoming Social Equity Educator meeting

All Seattle Education Association (SEA) members who believe in bringing social justice ideas into our classrooms and union are welcome and encouraged to attend. Our next meeting is on:

When: Sunday December 17<sup>th</sup> – 10:00am-12:00 pm

Where: Rainier Beach Community Center  
(8825 Rainier Ave S, Seattle, WA 98118)

Contact us: [www.socialequalityeducators.org/join-us/](http://www.socialequalityeducators.org/join-us/) or call: 206-851-4963

### The following Black Lives Matter at School new business item will be voted on at the December 11 Representative Assembly. SEE encourages all reps to vote YES to pass this:

- Whereas The Seattle Education Association has taken a national leadership role in the Black Lives Matter at School movement, now inspiring a dozen major cities to join us in our movement for change,
- Whereas there are far too few Black educators and educators of color in proportion to the number of students of color in the schools,
- Whereas zero tolerance discipline and over-policing of our youth has proven to be ineffective in the reduction of discipline, and Restorative Practices has proven to be a powerful tool in the reduction of disproportionate discipline,
- Whereas according to the Washington Post this year there have been 898 police involved killings, including 204 of Black people
- Whereas the creation and implementation of an Ethnic Studies curriculum is of critical importance to supporting the diversity of students, and currently in development in SPS, and The Seattle Education Association RA unanimously voted to support mandatory K-12 Ethnic Studies curriculum in SPS,
- Be it resolved that the Seattle Education Association join the national call for Black Lives Matter at School Week to kick off Black History Month during **February 5<sup>th</sup> to February 11<sup>th</sup>**.
- Be it further resolved that SEA encourage its members to wear Black Lives Matter shirts to school that week and teach lessons that week about the school-to-prison-pipeline, Black immigrant youth, Black women empowerment, Black LGBTQ community, and Black history.

(Editor's note: Members of SEE have been working closely with educators from Philadelphia who are members of the Caucus of Working Educators in the Philadelphia Federation of Teachers. These Philly educators, as much as anyone, have been leading the national organizing for the Black Lives Matter at School week of education and action. In recognition of their inspiring leadership and tireless effort, SEE reprints their brilliant racial justice statement. It perfectly encapsulates the politics and solidarity that is driving this organizing.)



### Educators' Vision

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### Mission

Social Equity Educators (SEE) is a new rank-and-file organization of educators inside the Seattle Education Association that seeks to transform education in terms that empower students, teachers, and the communities that our public schools serve. As members of the SEA we understand that the educator's union has a vital role to play in creating an equitable education system. As educators we understand the importance of using culturally relevant and holistic curriculum to empower our students. We have come together to fight against the corporate reform of our schools and to organize for a socially just education system.

## Racial Justice Statement of the Caucus of Working Educators

The Caucus of Working Educators believes that purposeful action needs to be taken in order to eliminate the adverse outcomes derived from perpetual structural racism evident in public education.

- **WE** want public school based policies that resist the criminalization of students of color.
- **WE** want curriculum and pedagogy that recognizes the collective contribution of all groups to modern society.
- **WE** want a full and fair funding formula that can provide for all of the needs of our students and schools.
- **WE** want standardized testing to end and no longer be used as the criteria to shutter schools since these tactics adversely affect low income, Black, and Latino communities.
- **WE** want to attract, develop, and retain more teachers of color.

**WE** are aware of the barriers that all of our students and families face that limit their chances and opportunities to achieve academic success and a positive sustainable quality of life. **WE** support all organizations and collective work that are against stop and frisk policies, support the fight for fair and safe housing, support a living and sustainable wage for all citizens, and the right for all to have access to affordable and equitable healthcare.

The Caucus of Working Educators believes that this Racial Justice Statement promotes equity, human life, educational and social justice, and will develop the necessary knowledge and actions necessary to eliminate the barriers created by prejudice, stereotyping, discrimination and bias in Philadelphia and beyond.

## SEE Stands in Solidarity with the Seattle School Bus Drivers!

By Darrin Hoop

On November 29, 400 plus Seattle Public School Bus drivers, members of Teamsters Local 174, struck for one-day against First Student. The workers picketed at the company's two locations: one in the South Park neighborhood and the other in the Lake City Way neighborhood.

According to the Teamsters Local 174 website:

"The Unfair Labor Practice strike will protest First Student's unilateral change and implementation of an inferior medical plan for its employees--an illegal action under the National Labor Relations Act, as healthcare is the subject of negotiations and cannot be changed without bargaining with the employees' Union."

As part of a contract the two sides finalized last year, they agreed to delay a discussion of health care and retirement benefits for one year. They began new negotiations back in July.

A union spokesperson highlighted that only 26 of the 400 plus drivers can afford health care and none of the drivers have an adequate retirement plan.

*The Seattle Times* reports that entry level drivers earn \$18 an hour and that drivers who work less than 30 hours a week don't receive any health care benefits.

At least 12,000 students in Seattle Public Schools out of the 50,000 plus were affected by the strike.

Before the strike, in a letter to the company Pegi McEvoy, assistant superintendent for operations at SPS, argued:

"Should daily bus service be disrupted, the lives and education of many students will be significantly and adversely impacted. In addition to this disruption, Seattle Public Schools could also face substantial costs to address your failure to provide the contractually obligated service."

SPS threatened to seek damages of \$1.2 million per day of the strike from First Student. The district and the company are in year one of a three-year contract worth \$27 million a year.

While the district's words seem harsh, we feel it's important to not let the district off the hook in this struggle. According to *The Seattle Times*:

"Last year, Seattle School Board members emphasized the importance of retaining drivers when they approved the First Student contract, worth at least \$27 million a year. They requested data to see how much it would cost for the district to offer health-care benefits to drivers who work 20-29 hours per week. The district decided against providing those benefits, which would have cost \$1.7 million annually."

Like any good student, let's do the math. The district agreed to pay First Student over \$81 million over the next three years, but it couldn't afford the extra \$5.1 million during that time for the health care benefits our fellow union members more than deserve.

The other option would be for First Student to take that extra \$5.1 million out of its profit. The company still would have been left with \$76 million for the next three years. This money is a drop in the bucket for First Student.

It's parent company is FirstGroup plc. It has operations in Britain, Ireland, Canada, Mexico, Panama, US, and India. It employs over 110,000 workers who transport over 2.2 billion passengers annually. According to its website, it runs five different divisions:

- First Student is "The largest provider of student transportation in North America—more than twice the size of the next largest competitor."
- First Transit is "One of the largest private sector providers of public transit management and contracting in North America."
- Greyhound is "The only national operator of scheduled intercity coach transportation services in the US and Canada."
- First Bus is "One of the largest bus operators in the UK, with a fifth of the market outside London."
- First Rail is "One of the UK's most experienced rail operators, carrying around 140 million passengers across our two franchises and our open access operation."

The adjusted revenue in 2016 for all five divisions combined exceeded \$6.7 billion. The money is clearly there to provide proper health care and retirement benefits for these Teamsters.

Social Equality Educators stands in solidarity with the school bus drivers and calls on both SPS and First Student to immediately meet their demands!

We encourage all our fellow union members in the Seattle Education Association, the other unionized workers in Seattle Public Schools, and workers throughout the city to stand shoulder to shoulder with them as well.

Especially in the new era of Trump in the White House, it's imperative that the entire labor movement, whether union or non-union, live by the old Industrial Workers of the World slogan that "an injury to one is an injury to all".

## Seattle Students Need Housing Justice

By Stan Strasner

As the housing crisis in Seattle gets worse and worse, students and families are being pushed out of their homes. Homelessness among students in King County has doubled in the past five years. One in five students at some Seattle elementary schools are homeless.

Educators know that when students aren't getting their basic needs met, they have a hard time learning in school. One of the best ways to help students succeed at school is to make sure that all students enter the school building having started their day with a healthy meal, quality healthcare, and a place to call home. What has the city of Seattle been doing to address the crisis?

Two years ago, former Mayor Ed Murray declared a state of emergency on the homelessness crisis. Since then, there has been a strategy implemented to sweep homeless encampments. The city has spent millions of dollars on sweeps. In 2016 alone, there were 601 of them. With this shocking amount of resources going into the strategy, you have to wonder what the outcome has been.

These sweeps have been a continual disruption for some of our most marginalized community members who are trying to get back on their feet. There have been 71 deaths so far this year. As the weather gets colder, there is an urgent need for real solutions right now. How can we begin to actually address the problem?

Washington state has the most regressive tax structure in the country. The poor and working class end up burdened with a much higher effective tax rate than the wealthy residents. It is an outrage that in a state with the two wealthiest people in the world, Jeff Bezos and Bill Gates, people can't afford to pay the rent. It's past time to tax the rich to provide public housing, improve social services, and fund education.

How can a movement for social and economic justice push the city to take action to provide solutions that will address the problems?

We will need the social weight of a mass movement to fight for the interests of our working class and oppressed students and families in Seattle. We need educators, students, families, and the whole Seattle community to join together in the fight to:

- Tax big business to fund affordable housing as a real solution to homelessness.
- Stop the sweeps. Our homeless community members deserve to live with dignity and security.
- Get rent control. Rents have risen 57% in six years in Seattle. It's time to take action.

For more information: <http://www.stopthesweeps.org>, <https://www.housingforallseattle.org/>